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**MOGAN CULTURAL CENTER  
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**LAOTIAN SECRET WAR EXHIBIT**

**INFORMANT: TED RASAKHAM**

**INTERVIEWERS: SARAH MORRISON AND MEHMED ALI**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 2, 2008**

**S = SARAH**

**T = TED**

**A = ALI**

**Tape 08.12**

S: This is Sarah Morrison and Mehmed Ali interviewing Ted Rasakham on February 2, 2008 for the Laotian Exhibit. And Ted, if I could just start off by asking where were you born?

T: I was born in Savannakhet, Laos.

S: Savannakhet?

T: Yes.

S: Laos, in what year?

T: In 1952.

S: Umhm. Okay. Was that a town, or near a city?

T: Really the town I live is a small town. I live in, I born in countryside of Laos.

S: Oh okay.

T: So when we say about Savannakhet, it's a big city and my town is close to Vietnam. Yah, it's a really jungle village.

S: Oh really? (T: Yah) Okay. Now did you grow up there?

T: Yah, I grow up there.

A: So you were actually born in (T: Countryside), and what's the name of that particular place?

T: Particular place, the name is, the town is [Asepon.]

A&S: Sepon?

T: Yah, [Asepon,] yah.

S: So you were born in the countryside, but you grew up in the city?

T: And I know I born in countryside. Grow up in countryside, and I come to study in the city. (S: Oh okay) I live in the city not long before I come to United States.

S: Okay. So you went to school then. So when did you go to school? From what ages did you go to school?

T: I don't know really, because in our country, in our age of seven, people go to school. They hold their hand up to the ear. When we touch the hand of the ear that mean they be able to go to school. I guess about seven or eight years.

S: Oh okay.

A: So when you're able to put your hand over your head (T: Hold on your ear) and touch the ear on the opposite side of your arm, that's when they will allow you to go to school?

T: Yah, allow you to go to school, yah.

S: When you have that coordination? [Chuckles]

T: Yah.

S: Wow.

A: That's a unique testing [unclear]. [All laugh] They should put that on the MCAS.

S: Can we do that? So, so that's when you started, when you could do that. And then how long did you go to school for?

T: I go to school in my village for three years. And then the school is finish in my village. Then I go to the city. The name of city and I be a Monk. I study in a Temple, and I come to study in they call [Aseponthong]. I born [Asepon.] Then I come to study [Aseponthong], the name of the city, the bigger city than my city.

S: Oh okay. Now you went to study to be a Monk?

T: Yah, I was a Monk for eight years. So I study when I an affiliate three year and I be a Monk. And then I come to study in [Aseponthong], that mean Monk in there. So I study there for three more year, then I graduate.

S: Oh wow. So how old were you then when you graduated?

T: Ah, eighteen.

S: Eighteen?

T: Yah, eighteen.

S: Now was it common back then for people to go to become a Monk, to study to be a Monk?

T: Yah, yah, it's common. Yah, my family have three, four boys in my family, and three of us become a Monk.

S: Oh really? Okay. What did the other one do?

T: No, he doesn't do, he doesn't go, and he doesn't be able to read and write.

S: Oh really? So you have to be in school first, to be educated, and then you can be, you can go to school to be a Monk after?

T: Not really that time, but some people they make a choice, because they become the Monk, it's the way of religion too. You know, you believe and you (--) And then we believe and also we get educate. It doesn't mean they have to be a Monk, but some people they don't go to Monk, they don't be a Monk, but they study. The reason my brother not go to school, because we are a poor family and he doesn't want to go. No law for to go to school or not. That's up to you, you want to go or not in that time in my country.

S: Yah. Now when you went to be a Monk did you go by yourself, or your brothers with you at that time?

T: Because the ceremony in the village, you know, who anyone who want to be a Monk, just the whole family, or the people in the community, the ceremony.

A: So a lot of people became Monks at the same time?

T: No.

A: Just you at that particular time.

T: Yah, yah, in particular time, yah. Usually the people go to Monk when somebody die.

S: Oh really?

T: Yah, like father die, and the children or somebody be Monk too. That mean, that's for religious ceremony, you know, to send the spirit of that dead man, or that woman, and go to heaven. So, and that's why. Then after they become Monk like that they don't want to return to home. Just live in the Temple and study.

S: Oh that's interesting. I didn't know that.

A: So did somebody die in your family? Is this why you became a Monk?

T: Yah, my uncle. My uncle die.

A: On which side?

T: My mother. My younger, my mother younger brother.

S: Now what was your (--) Getting to that, what was mom's name, and your dad's name?

T: My mom name [Lot]. Lot, it's L-O-T.

S: Okay.

T: And my father is My, and we spell M-Y. MY, it's like my, but we say My [Sounds like me.]

S: But you say Me. Okay, like oh me. [Chuckles] Okay. What did you parents do for work?

T: They farmer. Yah, they farming.

S: Rice, or?

T: Yah, rice. Rice.

S: Did you help out, and your brothers helped out?

T: Yes. Yah, since we, we able to walk you know, I think maybe three year and we work in the farm. You know, we take care of buffalo. We take care of chicken, everything, because we don't have no salary, only farm take care of us.

S: When you were three years old, or you mean for three years you did that?

T: I think when we start three years old, because you know, when we give our mother and father hand and we work, be able to work, you know. [Both chuckle] So we [a limit] time to start, you know. Like, at home, okay, can you bring water? When we go get the water from the lake, from the river. They have small basket you know to, you be able to carry you know. And they okay, when the parent or big brother, sister, go to jungle, jungle to get the wood, we follow them. We learn from them. Everything they do we do.

S: Imitation. Do you remember your grandparents' names on either side of your family?

T: No. Not at all.

S: Not at all.

T: Not at all. I am the fifth boy in the family. So I know my story of my mother, my mother's name Lot. That mean that she's almost the last one of her family. But when she born, I think about three years, they said three year, four year, and her parents passed away. She's nobody, you know, just stay with somebody.

S: Hm. Does she have brothers and sisters too?

T: She have two old brothers, and young, one younger brother.

S: And were they separated do you know? Or did they stay together?

T: They stay together until they married.

S: Okay.

T: Yah, but now they all die. Even my mother die too.

S: Oh really. Do you remember any family on your dad's side at all?

T: Yah, my dad's side, that's a big family. Yah, big family. In the history, the story of my last name, Rasakham, it's our great, great grandpa. So.

S: Was that his first name, or was that his last name that came from that?

T: We fix, really last and our name, because in my country we don't have last name.

S: So Rasakham was really your, maybe your great grandfathers' first name?

T: Yah, and let's see, RA. Really his name is [Sar] (A: Okay), Sar. Then he get a good thing. He do a good thing, and somebody recognized him. That mean they have like gold, silver, expensive thing, give to him.

A: Gold and silver?

T: Yah, yah, and then they said, okay. When they ask that, "What's a Sar?" We have different, many Sar. And they said, "Sara, Sarakham, that me the one who get the gift. So they just figure out the name.

A: Okay.

S: That's a cute story.

T: And the history is he have eight daughters, and no boy at all in the family.

S: The great, great grandfather of your grandfather?

T: Yah, great grandfather has no, no boy in the family, no men in the family. They're all women. And then they stay in one, they call one village. That village all belong to the family. [Laughs]

S: Oh really.

T: Yah, and so now we have about twenty family in there, twenty house in that location that they call village, all belong to that grandpa.

A: And this is your village that you were born in?

T: Yes, yes, still my village now, yah.

A: Okay. Great.

S: So you mentioned that you had brothers, right?

T: Yah, I have now, really my mother she have nine children, but my older sister they die. One, when she born a baby, they were six baby, and she die with the baby. And the second sister, she die when she have first baby.

S: Oh really.

T: And now the children of my sister, she have six, and three of them die and three of them left now. They have their own family, my sister. And my brother, my brother one, he just passed away let's see, last August, the one that's younger than me. And my older is still alive and he have his family.

S: Now where are you? Are you in the middle like of the children?

T: I'm in the middle, (S: You are?) the fifth.

S: Fifth out of nine?

T: Fifth of the nine, yah.

S: Wow. So what was your childhood like growing up? You said you helped out on the farm, I'm mean the rice fields and everything. Did you play games with your brothers and sisters? Did you, you know, what did you do on a daily basis I guess?

T: In my family, my brother, my sister, they're healthy. (S: They're healthy?) Yah, and I'm not healthy and a weak boy. And they say, "Okay, you cannot work hard. You go to school." (S: Oh really) Yah, the reason I go to school is because I'm a weak boy in the family.

S: How were you weak? Do you know?

T: Not really weak, but because when they work they working hard, you know, like lift something heavy, (S: Oh yah) or go to [help]. It's, we call, we work together for a simple life that family, they want to build a house, and of course the people in the village they help each other. (S: To help, umhm) Yah, or they have, they want to take the wood to be [post] of the house, and I cannot carry with them. And my brother they go. There's heavy work and they go. [Both chuckle] They like work [unclear]. And they support me to go to school. That's how I go to school.

S: That's interesting.

T: And we're getting along good. (S: You got along?) Yah, getting along good.

S: It was a tight family?

T: Yah, and my father died when I eleven years old. (S: Eleven?) Yah, eleven, yah. (S: Oh wow) I think when I be, I be a Monk when I was ten, (S: Really) and one years later, or two years later I really don't know the date, but about two years later and my father die.

S: Um, and what happened to the family then? Did you stay on farm, did everyone stay together?

T: No, no, when I ten years old and I be a Monk I get out from the farm. Yah, you know, from the farm, but my family they still (S: They were still there), they still there. Yah, my sister marry. And when my father die and my older sister, her husband, I mean my brother-in-law come to take over family to help family out, do heavy thing. My

sister, and sister and my older brother, and he's a little older than me, you know, like [unclear] when he's thirteen, so around that time, and the rest of them young. So I go to Temple and they take care of the house, and take care of mother.

S: But that's good, everyone pretty much stayed together.

T: Yah, yah, stayed together, yah.

S: So you were a Monk, and you were there until you were eighteen. (T: Yah) Right, from about ten to eighteen then you were a Monk?

T: Yah, eight years.

S: And where was it again, the city?

T: In the city [Aseponthong].

S: Umhm, so you lived there.

T: Yah, I lived there back and forth. When the school time I come to the city to start. When there's no school and I go to my village, but still in the Temple, not work in the family.

S: Oh okay. And how often did you study? Was it like weeks at a time, and then you'd have a break, or?

T: No, it's like regular school year.

S: Oh, okay.

T: Ten months in school.

S: Umhm. So you'd study for a week, and then would you go home on a weekend?

T: No, we stayed at the Temple all the time.

S: Oh you stayed there all the time.

T: Yah, Temple all the time, because a Monk it's the law of the Buddha, the Monk have to stay in the Temple, cannot eat at nighttime. (S: Oh) Yah, cannot eat at nighttime, only study. Cannot work, they not allowed to go to work. Just study (S: Yah, it's a whole lifestyle) and pray, yah.

S: And pray, yah. So you did that until you were eighteen. What happened when you were eighteen?



T: After eighteen, and I can work. So the regular man, and get out from the Temple and become regular man looking for the lady. (S: Civilian) Yah, civilian, call civilian. And then I go to become soldier. (S: Oh really) Soldier called USA.

S: And which, so which side did you fight for then as a soldier?

T: American side.

S: On the American side?

T: Yah, American side.

S: Against the Communist?

T: Against the Communist, yah. (S: Okay, so) And then I go for, really when I get a gun I training only one month and then we go to the war.

S: They trained you for one month?

T: Yah, about a month. (S: And that was it and they said okay) And then we go to the war. And in three months we come to the camp, and I go back to my home. And next year I come again, go to other group, and I just volunteer and we get paid. Just register for the soldier, and be in the farm. And then about a month we go again. So I go to two times.

S: So you weren't with the same group then?

T: No, no, they different.

S: Because you were a volunteer?

T: Different group. Yah, volunteer.

S: Different than the other soldiers I guess.

T: They different.

A: Kind of like the National Guard verses the regular army. So you'd only have to go a couple of times a year (T: Yah, yah) to be on active duty.

T: Yah, active duty, go to the war really as a war for fighting.

A: So why don't you tell us that whole story as best you can remember. Like where were you when you decided you wanted to become a soldier? Why did you decide? Where did you enlist? And carry us through that whole time line if you will.

T: Okay. And when I go back to my village, in that time as a young boy you need money, you know, I need money. I want money to spend. And we don't have much job. We don't have job really. And lots of people, when we go to soldier, become soldier because they get good pay. If government soldier they pay about 3,000 kip, and if American soldier they pay 6,000, 6,000 kip. And if you go to the war they pay double. It's 12,000 kip. So then many people go the same, same day with me you know. We just go volunteer, and we're in a city, because my village during that time, everyday we see the plane go to bomb and the sound of a gun every day, every night, but it's still far from my village. We can see airplane go, and we heard a gun, bomb, and then we, because I live close to the north. And then we come to the south, to the big city and volunteer. And then after I volunteer and the soldier, they training me in a group. And about a month they sent me to what do you call, to the war with the whole group, in other state, not my state. I go to south of Laos.

S: South of Laos? In what area? What town?

T: In Pakse. Pakse, Champasak, Salavan, Attapu. It's close to Cambodia. Close to Cambodia.

S: And how long were you there for?

T: That time about three months. I don't know exactly or not, I think I stayed about three months, and then we come back to the camp. Come back to the camp. Then I go back to my village. It's like a prison, but we never return to camp again. So, because when we don't return, in about two weeks, three weeks, and then, that maybe out. So they select other soldiers, other people. Then I go to my village, stay in my village and help my family out. And after we work on farm, we done the farm, and the next year I'm thinking about money again. I go back again to the camp. And I go to the same camp, but the group I be with them, they in the war, they already go out. And I just volunteer to register to other group.

A: Register to another group?

T: Yah, another group.

S: To do the same thing though, to volunteer again?

T: Yah, volunteer again, get [some money.] And in that time, now after we ready, and they send us to the north. It's in Louangphrabang. Louangphrabang, that's a big name, a lots of people know if they go that time, but we don't go to city, or in the jungle, in the mountain, yah, during that time. And then about three months in there, and we come back to camp again in Savannakhet. When we come to the camp they let us to stay about I think not even a week, and they don't allow us to go home yet. And they send us to now Tha Khaek they call, in the middle of the Laos, Tha Khaek. And we get big fight again that time. And they decide, agreement, I still in the war, we're still fighting. We're still fighting. They chase us. We search them.

S: The Communist chased you?

T: Yah, the Communist, yah. Vietnamese [unclear]. Yah, and they said because our boss said we have to fight if we be able to stay here today and tomorrow, and just let them come to us. If we not fight, and we lost, this land is going to belong to Communist. So we have big fight, because in Vientiane they sign agreement, like February 21, 1993.

A: 1973?

T: Yah, 1973, yah, they sign agreement. And we are still keep fighting that they really, really heavy that time.

A: So really you went out into the jungle to fight three separate times?

T: Yah, there separate time, yah.

A: So could you tell us some stories about each of those times that you went out? Your first impressions going into battle, what did you do, and who were you with, and how was the battle take place?

T: Because in a soldier group, when they say us, they call 1,000. I don't know how really translate, but they call 1,000. No, I don't know, 3, 3,000, I don't know what they call in English. 3,000 soldier.

A: Yah, maybe a battalion.

T: I don't know what they call.

S: Oh, a whole group of people.

T: Yah, yah, that's [unclear]. They say, Okay, now let those group, they're going to go through that state. That mean if they say [pom], that means 3,000 soldier, they call it 3,000, no 4,000. And in the 4,000, they have instead they call 1,000 with about 300 soldiers. The second step, 1,000, and then 100, and they call group now 30, 30 people. And they call team, it's 10 people.

A: Okay.

T: So when I go to the group, and the group leader, I am a small boy, because my body is small they said I'm not a big boy, but I'm good boy, so I stay with leader. When we go out from place to place, [unclear], and my [belong is big enough], and I don't carry a big gun like a bomb. I don't know what, when they call M60 (A: Yup), yah, it's one, they carry two. So I don't carry because I'm too small. They allow me, and when (--) The people were just same, same my size, but they are strong, where they said, "Why Ted don't have that [unclear]. They said, "Well he's a small boy, he's a big boy, you know."

So that guy, he loved me, he take care of me. And when we go out to the field we all go the same, but when we lag, we lag time for sleeping time and they want me to guard other about daytime, or early of the evening, not too late, because they afraid I'm going to sleep and enemies is going to come. So, and also, when we go to the field, and when we're shooting, my job is really, I dig the hole and waiting. So I don't do really bad thing. Even I be the soldier, they love me, you know. When a die soldier, they don't want me to carry them, you know, they [do] somebody.

S: Oh, when the soldier died? (T: Yah, when the soldier died) They don't want you to go get the body?

T: No, because when they carry soldier, and I'm not strong enough to carry other one. So I just said, somebody say, "Well don't use Ted because he's small." [Chuckles]

A: So what did you do during battle besides just wait? Did you go help get ammunition, or did you go get supplies, or help wounded people, or did you do any of that?

T: Yah, we do everything. I don't know how to explain, but because when we go to enemies, go to fight, really they shoot us, we shoot them. You know, like we just really, when they shoot us we stop fighting, and when they stop we run after them. So we run after them. So when they shoot we stop. And we surround when we see them we shoot them. Yah really when they shoot us. So I see many people wounded and die in front of me. But the one thing I see myself, I never shot the gun. (A: You didn't) No I didn't. I don't know, when I want, even they tell me what enemies look like, one day I just, we go to the front you know, of the enemies, and they take, we just run and I am the one who guard other. And then I see that, at nighttime, I see it look like a man, it look like animals, and I say, "Oh, somebody come," I talk to the guy who, what they call, like the one, our boss. "Should I shoot?" "No, no, no, you wait." And walk real close to me and he go to other side of the road. And they didn't, nothing happened. In the morning they have two horse in the house. You know, we stay in here and the horse in the house. And we stay there, 9:00 the airplane, they bring food to us and we get food, and we're ready to move out from that camp. We ready to move out and they shoot us. And what they called B42, (A: Okay) they shoot us from that house to us, and but don't hit anyone. Don't hit to anyone, but just a the ground around us, you know, because we're all around it, it doesn't even matter. [Chuckles] So then they report to other group, and they tell the story about what's going on and what they're going to do with that house. And they have horse in there, you know, but it's really close, you know. It's like this one and this house. Then they order, there's own boss, because I am, don't have much to talk about, communication you know, I just carry the gun and go and fight. And they say, okay, we, they order to destroy that house. And we shoot an M, what they call, 49. (A: Okay) The M49, they shoot to that house, bomb to that house, then we leave. Then other group, our other group come. And then later on we find out they died in there, three of them. (A: Three of them?) Yah, three of them died in that house, you know. They, really they have four weapon, but when they shoot they don't shoot back, and they're just ready to die with their weapon. That one I say, "Well I'm lucky they don't shoot me." Yah. And after that then we moved, moved to another place until we take place, we control all the

city. And then our boss said, "Okay, we're going to stay." No, no, then after that we go to Salavan. Salavan is closed to Vietnam. And we tried to get to the city of Salavan, then we recruit in there. We stay and about 3:00 we get to mountain, because all mountain, walk up and down, up and down. And we say, our boss say "Okay, we stay here." And in the morning, early in the morning when the sun go up our boss tell us to dig up the hole, we're going to stay in there a couple of days they said. Then we're going to go to the, we're going to fight to the, what we call, invade. (A: Invade?) Invade, yah, to the Salavan. And we still about 6:00 we take up the hole, you [unclear] ready. About 9:00 they come to shoot us. And that time I am the one who stand and guard other one. And they're shooting on that side, and that side. That side come close, close to me. And I really fall to sleep with my gun in hand. I really fall to (--) I see something in my eye. I say, "It look like chicken," you know. Look like chicken. I keep my eye, I don't see. And I fall to sleep, I see again, and it really come to combat you know, the whole side they come. And then somebody close to me, that side, he shoot, and then other side they shoot, but I don't shoot anything you know, because I don't see the people and I don't want to shoot gun too. And my boss said, "Ted, Ted, come back." I didn't come back. He run after me. And then the guy on the side shot that enemies, and I come to stand in the hole now. The guy, okay, you stay in the hole. And he shoot. When he see he shoot. So I just put the gun, put the bullet in the gun you know, because that gun we have 30 bullet.

A: 30 bullets?

T: Yah, 30 bullet. And he shoot about ten or fifteen, I put other one. Because enemies they know if we shoot 30 there, 30 times they're going to come to us right away. So we have to [unclear] about ten of them, or fifteen of them, we stop, we put other one in.

A: So you helped load the magazines with bullets for your other soldiers?

T: Yah, the soldier there.

A: Okay.

T: Yah, the one, he's older than me. He call me like his son. He call, "my son" he said. So he's helping me a lot too.

A: Were you scared at any of these times?

T: In that time I don't scare. The one thing I say, every time we get fired I want to sleep. I don't know why? [Ali and Sarah chuckle] Even they're shooting I really fall to sleep in that little hole. (A: Really) Yah, and the Communist and the enemies they come fight more, more, more, more now he tell us. He tell me, he said, "Get ready they're going to escape now, I know he's going to lose." And then he, then he said, "Come on [brother]." I got to take off my things, go run after him and we all lose for them. You know, then they follow us because the last one, we put a bomb in there, and when they follow us they had the bomb, that they call [bombie] or something.

A: Yah, the mines?

T: Yah. Bomb. And we go to other come back to close to Pakse, and then we stay in there. We all separate. We all separate because also they bomb too.

A: Who bombed?

T: The enemies, they bombed to us. That's why we cannot control, we cannot stay, because I think behind us you know, because they have a big bomb and lots of people die. I don't see it. Then we escaped. We just walked [unclear] and then we go to other mountain and then we stay there close to Pakse. Close to Pakse we stay there, and our boss tell us to dig the hole, you know, from around the mountain. It's like it's my [home,] but I have a small hole from connect to other around there. So we stay there. They said, "We're going to stay here for three months." Then we go back, you know, our term is done. Not only three months, we stay about two week. And at night time, in day time, cloudy, we cannot see. It's really, really cloudy. And airplane come to [bomb] food for us. We cannot see. They cannot see us. Even smoke anything. And they come one day, they cannot drop food. And they go back to Pakse, and the next day we really hungry. They order to come, and they just make some noise, just to make noise like bomb or something. And they just drop the food, but it's not our camp on the mountain. So some people they courage to go looking for, and get, and also and they bomb. They bomb from they call like 81M, M81 bomb from far away they bomb.

A: The Communist bomb, or the American?

T: Yah, Communist bomb. Communist bomb us. American cannot help us because no airplane, airplane cannot go to help us. No, then at night time we heard the tank truck. [Makes truck sounds] A lot, a lot they come in the South Salavan. And the city is Salavan. So then at day time they bomb us, and the bomb, bomb. Also not only bomb, they [unclear] M61, but they come back too. They come to shoot us, the front of us, and they bomb. Then after I think about three days we are in the hole in there, we cannot get out, because the bomb can put anywhere you know, drop anywhere. And I just see the people, they carry the wounded out. (A: They carry the wounded out?) Yah, they carry the wound out other side. And because they pass my side you know, I just see them walk. And then I don't know they bomb too much, bomb too much and then my [friends are ready] and then we have to loss we're going to go. And we pack everything ready. Then he called me, "Come on Ted," you know. I said, "Get out from my hole?" And I see some mine belonging in there, my [unclear], I don't want to take. He said, "No, no, don't care about that. Come." And so I run.

A: What did you leave behind?

T: Just [unclear]. Because when soldier go to the hole, we have shovel to dig the hole, (A: yah) and our food, our clothing, everything in the bag. (A: Okay) But that's one the

left over, and that one I'm still thinking I want it, but too many you know, it had a, what they call bombie, you know I put in here. (A: Yah) About six of them.

A: Like a grenade?

T: Yah, grenade, yah. Grenade, six of them. And like M16, I have on my side and put in my wrist, and carry my bag, and put M16 on this side, because we not carry [unclear]. Because our boss say, even we die, we die with it, you know, we don't lose it. And he said, "Come on," you know, because [unclear] they're shooting there, boom boom. Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, to us. So we know if we heard the sound out from over there, boom boom, we stay. They did boom, boom, boom to us, we escape. (A: Umhm) So then when I get out from my hole and I run, they shoot again, and I [unclear] lay down. And when they boom, boom, boom, we run again and then we run down to the mountain. And I don't know where my grenade go out. (A: Oh) And then I run again. Then my [bag] fall to my head and I cannot get up. First time I okay, but second time I cannot get up. And he call, he called me, he said, "Throw out your bag." And so I store my bag, and I have only my gun, and I run down to the hill. And instead we run down, we just slide down, and in there a lot of bags. (A: A lot of bags?) Yah, bag, because the soldier they can't [unclear] the bag, after they drop in there, they say, "Drop their bag," they have to go by themselves, you know. And some people wounded in there. No call for help, but we cannot help each other. We just run.

S: Try to get out.

T: Yah, try to get out.

A: What was the name of this mountain that you guys were stationed at?

T: We call Pou Den

A: Pou Den?

T: Yah, Pou Den. It's close to, really close to Pakxong. (A: Okay) Close to Pakxong. And we run to the Pakse, and Pakse is a big city. And in the daytime we walk, because we all from a different group now. You know, we ask them where, what are you? When you know we ask, and we go together. Not whole team, we don't see each other. My team only two, three of us, and about seven of us we don't know where, seven of them we don't know where they go. So just get out from there and we walk in daytime, at nighttime we stop. Stop where we are. And I think the Communist they walk at nighttime too, and we just quiet, let them walk by. Then at the daytime we walk again, for three days. And we get close to Pakse and the [free] side and we stay in there about a week. And we gather, because the people separate and we come together, then we go back again. At that time Thai soldier is in front of us. They in front of us. And then we stay there. Then I don't know, three days, or four days, I don't know how long, but then we go back. We walk. We walk back. We throw the Thai soldier camp. And after Thai

soldier camp about 100 feet then they [unclear] they shoot again. And the Communist enemies, they shoot us, but I still in the camp because when we walk.

S: In the Thai Camp around that area?

T: Yah, Thai Camp.

S: The Communist were there?

T: No, no, no. The Communist, they come to help us and they hired by American. (S: Oh) Yah they hired by American to come to help us.

A: The Thai?

T: Yah, Thai.

S: The Thai.

T: Thai soldiers. Thai soldier camp. (A: In Laos) In Laos.

A: Oh, I didn't realize that. Were they good warriors, the Thai? Were they good soldiers?

T: Ah, I don't know if they could fight or not. The story, what they tell us is that before they go to that camp they lose about a thousand, two thousand. But when we see them we say no, it's not, because when they dig a hole they go like this, like this. They say this guy. So enemies. And when enemy come this guy shoot to kill. This one shoot for get their bullet. Then when they get, I don't know what they call like, they can sell that one after they shot.

A: Oh, they sell the bullets?

T: Yah, bullet, because they want it full right. (A: Yah, the casing) Yah, they want it, because when we shot the little, the small one it goes, and brass one is fall down. (A: The brass) Yah, brass I think. That's why they tell us, no, when we got to fight we don't shot much, you know, we really, if we see we shoot it, if we don't see we don't shoot it.

A: So the Thai in other words were shooting a lot (T: Yah, shooting a lot) because they would get the brass and then be able to sell it?

T: Yah, that's what they tell us. [Chuckles] We say, no, no we don't do that. And then he see me, they say, well, they call the Laos soldier, it's really poor. You know because our gun always dirty because if we're sleeping there in the dirt you know, but they are all clean because they don't fight. [All chuckle] They always clean, for us, no. And why we moving out in the [unclear] and then I stay in the camp, they feed me some food. And



they call me go to dig hole where they're shooting, and I think they kind to me. They say, "Well you're like my son." You know, they give me food.

A: At the Thai Camp?

T: Yah, in the Thais Camp, Thai soldier.

S: Oh really.

T: Yah, when they take me. Then after when they in the front, they fight, fight, fight, and they gone and we be able to walk by. We go. After we get to Pakxong, and the tank, they come after they shoot again, and by the time we get there the other group come up to us, they're shooting, and when I get to over there, they get to us, they say, we well [unclear] we come today, you know, that same road. Yah, then we go to the Pakxong and we stay there. Then they send us home after the term over.

A: Now was that the second time you were (--)

T: That my first time.

A: That's the first time. Okay.

S: That was the first time? Wow.

T: First time, yah.

A: So how about the second time?

T: Then when I come to Savannakhet in the [back] camp, and I go to home. And almost a year I think I don't remember, and I come back again.

A: Do you remember what year you first went into the service? You said you were eighteen?

T: I'm not really know about my age. That year I know is '82.

A: Maybe 70?

T: '81.

A: '71?

T: Yah, yah, yah, '71. Yah.

A: '71 or '72?

T: Yah, '71 then '72 I go home, relax, and '73 I come.

A: Okay.

T: So that's why between '72 and '73, because when I go to Louangphrobang and I come back, I go to Tha Khaek, and [unclear] in Tha Khaek.

A: Yah. So tell us about the second time you were on active duty?

T: Second time when I come back to the camp I register in the training in there. Then they sent us to Louangphrobang. And to Louangphrobang we walk a lot, because mountain to mountain, mountain to mountain. And we don't shoot much in there. And I go one time, then we get [fired]. In the mountain we stay in this side, enemy stay at that side. On the mountain we see each other. And (--)

A: So you're fairly close, but the valley is in between you guys?

T: Yah, yah, in between.

A: So how far away were you?

T: Ah, we just see the people. We know the people, but we don't see the face. They walk, you know, we see them walk.

A: So is it too far away (T: Yah, far away) to actually shoot?

T: No, cannot shoot by M16. (A: Okay) Cannot shoot, it's too far.

A: But you can see them on the other mountain?

T: Can see in the mountain, and they walk. They walk through to their hole, and they go out and they walk. We see them, and they see us too. And then when we go down, we go to them, they fight. We cannot go, and we stay there one day. And the next day, I don't know how many days we stayed there, but before we go back to them, we fight to them because we, I think more, more than two or three days, we keep fighting in the hill. We don't win. We cannot get to them. And one day, that day, in the morning they come to, they call to us first. They call, "Hey, hey are you awake?" We say, "Yes." "Do you want to see my candy? Do you want to have my candy?" [Laughs] And we say, "Yes." And they shoot to us. They shoot to us about four, five of them. And then I think the leader, they call airplane to come.

S: Their leader, or your leader?

T: My leader, our leader. And they call, some more airplane, like they call [Beaver], they come, they just turn around, then they shoot the smoke to the camp. Smoke on

there. Then which they will come out. They get out from their hole, and they say [makes sound], then they curse to us. They curse on and they run away.

A: They cursed at you?

T: Yah, yah, and they curse to us before they run away! And they said we are American dog. They call us American dog.

A: How do you say “American dog” in Laos?

T: Ma American.

A: Ma American?

T: Ma American, yah. And then they run away. After they run away, and then under [unclear] they come, they go to bomb. It's a big bomb. After they bomb and we walk up. Then we stay. Some of us stay in there, some is going more further other mountain. Go to the other mountain. And go up to the mountain. And then when we go we see lots of the camps in there. We see some food. I think they be there for a long, long time, because we see the rice. You know they dig a hole on the mountain, it's a big hole, and they have rice in there.

A: They have rice inside the hole?

T: Inside the hole, yah. (A: Like a tunnel?) Yah, yah, but along the mountain, the mountain we have the water, what they call river, stream. (S: Stream?) Yah, stream and beside the stream, and the side of the stream they have a hole. When we go inside the hole and the big hole in there they have rice in there. So it's like barn for the rice. (A: Yah) And I go in Louangphrabang, only that time I get [fight.] And after that, the time, I [unclear] come back to Savannakhet Camp, the main camp. In about three days they call us to go to fight again in Tha Khaek. Like I said, that [unclear]. So we walk a lot. We don't have food for three days. No food, no water. The leader always lie to us. They say, “Oh, close, close, walk.” And , “Okay, pretty soon we get, walk, walk.” You know, so we're hungry, we thirsty. Some we eat leaf. Some like one thing they said, “No, no, we will die,” but we do it. Some people they [unclear] and they drink.

A: Really?

T: Yah, [unclear] and drink. Because there's not water, we really thirsty. And then we walk, walk about three days I think. Three days or four days, then we get to military camp in there, and they just have us get the water. And we rest about two, three hours, then we continue to go, just walk. And at that time, after that [not long] then we have big fight. We have big fight then we sign agreement. After we sign agreement, we say, “Okay, now it's us in here.” You know the water, other side it's enemies. And when we go to looking for the fish and they see us, and we see them, but don't shoot each other.

S: Where was that?

T: In Tha Khaek.

S: In Tha Kkaek still.

A: Now did you, in these other battles, did you actually shoot the rifle?

T: Ah, no. No I don't have a chance to shoot. The one I shoot gun is the one I go the first one. That one I scared, I really scared, because the [unclear] because they won't go away. I just shoot through the hole, not shoot the people. (A: Oh yah) Shoot through the hole. And my boss say, "Why are you shooting you see?" "I think something in the hole." [Laughs] So really, if after I shoot then we feel good. I feel good. So that's the story that I remember.

S: So that's all of the (--)

T: And also when they sign agreement our term is over and we come to big camp. And then they release us to go to our home. When we get out from the camp the people say, "Well our village, they said, that all belong Communist enemy, we cannot go there." (S: Your village where you grew up?) Yah, my village. They took over my village. And then, and we really think about our village, you know, we don't think anywhere. You know, we want to go and have fun, and a good time our home. And I go and see, we, I get out from the camp, go to, because three city before to my city. And then I go to the city I come to study. I say [Aseponthong]. In that time when I be a Monk in there they are nice, but when after I come back, at that time they all destroyed. They all big house, then they put the hut now. They're all huts.

A: All huts?

T: Yah. I remember just the people live in the hut, no more house. They all burn out. All destroyed. So, but still American side, government side stay in there, soldier in there, but they're fighting when we go to fight [other state]. And we tell the people in there. They say, yes our village is still okay, you know, but sometime they come, sometime they don't. Sometime they come at daytime, and then nighttime we don't see. So I think, then we say, we are safe to be there because we don't have a gun. Then I went there, and I'm just thinking about are they going to shoot us, you know. But I'm ready to surrender, you know. If enemies come you know, we're going to surrender, but when I get to my village it's safe. And we stay there. And our term was two week they allow us to go home, two or three weeks. After that we come back. But they know, Communist, they know our day. And about the next day, like tomorrow we're going to, our day is going to end, you know, we are going to leave the village to come back to the camp. And like for example, like twenty, we leave. At nineteen, in the morning, I see the people they run. My brother-in-law [just pound the rice], and my sister and my brother-in-law. And after they done [pounding] the rice, and I go upstairs and I go to my house to clean up the house. And my brother he's going to go to release the buffalo to go, let it go to

the, to [unclear]. In daytime we just let it go by themselves, you know, free. And he going to go release buffalo to get out from the [cage], and he see the soldier run on the road, in the street, in the sidewalk. "Get up to the house! Get up to the house! Get up to the house!" And my brother run back to my house. And he said, "Go in the house." And the soldier come. The soldier come. And it's really not our government soldier, it's a Communist soldier, because we wear same clothes, same weapon. (S: Oh really) Yah, same weapon, same clothes. (S: They look the same) We don't know who is who.

S: The Vietnamese Communist?

T: The Laos Communist.

S: Oh, the Laos Communist then.

T: The Laos Communist. You know when they go to the village they don't use Vietnamese. The Communist go where is big fight, Vietnamese, when peace that's control is Laos. So he tell us, tell people to go up because [unclear], because we don't shoot the big gun, we shoot the AK, or M16 and they go, they far. I walk to, no I run, not walk, and they order people to go up. And I go up in the house, because I own house, it's a tall house you know, like here. And then they walk by about five of them, or six of them go around my village, and they come back. And some people come now. The people come, and they gather men. All men go to a meeting. All men go to a meeting. And I don't go because I still afraid. And they have release, bring together the people, they said enemies come to the village. And the leader of village, they don't know. They say, "No, we don't see enemies." They call us enemies. And they take your name out. And they call name, this one, this one, and before they call them they have two soldier, government Laos soldier, that soldier belong to a government. Not like us, not American soldier. (A: Yah) Have two soldier. They said, they really, well what they call, like they point gun to there, you tell everything you know.

A: So the Communist went up to those two soldiers (T: The two soldiers, yah) and said, "Tell us all the information."

T: Yah, tell all information. And then after they gather all men and they take the leash out, and they used two guys, two soldier go to my house. And when they go over there with the people, other people, the village people, and no, no, not two, only the boy and a soldier, and Communist soldier, and he call me Ted. Ted's house, you know, and they just call, "Ted home?" And I have no choice you know. I said, "Yes." "And come down, go with us." And then they go to other house. We have about I think about nineteen of us in village in that day.

A: Former soldiers?

T: Yah, former American soldiers, former soldiers. And then they go to the [unclear] and school, inside school, and the Communist they're around the field. And they say bad about politics, you know, and they say about enemies, and they say bad, bad, bad things.

They really get mad. They really get mad. And they really, they say about it here, you know, they put the, what they call small gun, what they call? (A: Pistol?) Pistol, yah, just put in his hand. You know, enemies come to village you don't report. No, we don't know, you know. Where's the children? No, no children. [Unclear], but like they married, they have children, you know. We are not children, you know, like that what they say. They really get mad. They want to kill us. And ah, we scared! But I look at the window. I know I cannot escape. If I escape they're going to shoot me in the field. And just take a [unclear] in there. And they said many, many things. Nobody talk anything, only them, because the gun is like this. They were all (S: Twirling it around, pointing around) yah, twirling around, point the gun, [few words unclear].

A: They point the gun at every different person?

T: Yah, yah, each one they talk to. If they say, if the leader you not show, you know, you are enemies. You raising enemies, you take enemies, you know, like that. And if for some reason, oh they're enemy, we stop. You know, we see it's enemies. They say like that. And then after that that guy really get mad and they change the person they say now come to talk. Now we want to be peace. Those people, they're enemies. You ask do you believe, and they're going to stay here or you think they're going to go back to the, to burn their camp? And if you think they're going to go back we're going to take them with us today. We don't know what we're going to do, you know, like mean they're going to kill. They don't know what they're going to do to us. They don't tell. They just ask those people. You believe that those people are going to go back to their camp, or they're going to stay with you? Some people they say, they think, you know, they think. And I think they're going to stay with us because all their home in here. You believe him, you know, not positive then. And they stop. And then they say, Okay. They ask many then they say, "If you think you're going to be able to help them, not to let them go back to their camp, they're going to be a good people, you know, build your country, have village, and we will let them stay with you. Otherwise we will take with us." And they say, "Well if you allow we will keep them. We try to help them." Now I feel good. I feel good. And they say, "Okay," then they allow us to stay.

A: So was there two guys that spoke to you that day? Like two Communist?

T: I think two, or three on there. I don't remember, three I think.

A: And so was one guy, he yelled?

T: He yelled really strong, really hanging gun, his gun, play with gun a lot. Jump up and down.

A: Yah, and then the other guys?

T: The other guy, polite.

A: Polite. (S: Oh)

T: Yah, yah, polite. Oh yah, [unclear].

A: You know they call that good cop, bad cop.

T: Yah! See I don't, [words unclear] because now, they're all gone now. [Unclear] they get killed all. I don't know who kill them, but they all die.

A: Who? All those Communists?

S: Oh, those guys?

T: Yah, all the leader Communists there. (A: Really) Because we know each other, when they come to announce, and now those people, they all die.

A: When? When did they die?

T: Oh, thirty year now, thirty-one year. I don't know now.

A: Old, you mean they die of old age?

T: No. No, somebody kill.

A: Somebody killed them.

T: Somebody killed them.

A: Did they, where, they weren't from your village?

T: No. No.

A: How do you know they were killed?

T: Ah, because we know each other in there. (A: Yah) Anyways I'm going to go to my village if I go back to Laos now, about two or three district they know me. (A: Yah) "Oh Ted going to come." Because there not many people there and we know each other. Like they said (--)

A: Do you remember the guys' names? The kind of good cop, bad cop?

T: I don't want to say I know. (A: Okay) No, I don't want to say. They die, all die. And then we stay in there. You know, and then they come to encourage us, you know, like what they call, like the drafting? (A: Yup) Why they come to encourage us if you want to have a chance, you going to be a soldier with us, or you want to go to study something, you know. They encouraged people to go up. And I tell you if I stay there I'm still scared of them, and I volunteer to go. I say, "Okay, I want to go." And they,

what do I want to be? I want to be [unclear], and you want to be teacher, you want to be official, you want to be police, you want to be doctor, or lawyer, anything you want, you want you know, you wish. And I say, "Oh, I want to be doctor." And I volunteer to go with them. So when I go, it's not like what they said. They said we have school, you know. When I go in the jungle every day we, because you know, soldier camp is war. You know, just like us, they just sleep in the jungle hiding from the enemies. And you're hungry? I say I go with them about I say more than, less than a month, less than a month. Every day we work, work, working hard. And I feel, I don't know what I feel, but I want to go back to my home. And when I stayed there in that camp, some people because they know, they come but they don't know what they're doing. Why they go? Why they go, you know? And he's get back. They come to get him back. Or they punish family. They tell that [unclear], you come to the camp then you get out from your home. They really follow you. And I say, "Well I want to go to my village. I don't have enough clothes because what they say. When you go over there you don't have to do anything. You don't have to take anything with you, just clothes. Just one clothes, one shoes, one pair, just enough, they have everything in there. But when I go there, nothing! Nothing, even my blanket, you know. Then I say, well I have to be patient. And I talk to my friend too, my friend, because he's American soldier too. Sometime he say, "Oh no, it's 3:00. No, he says, 3:00 we used to see that if American, if we are soldier before in there. We call team, we don't say American. We just say when we are team, 3:00 airplane come to by, come to drop food. But now we still, 3:00 we're still looking for food, you know, searching for food, you know, in the jungle, in the lake, everywhere you know. We [unclear] a team. And these people come to [searching] food, and like five people go looking for the food. And two, two guards, you know, one looking for food, one's waiting looking for enemy around, you know. Really, really [good take care]. And then come Saturday, we come back to the camp and wait, and [unclear]. And I talk to that guy, and we go back to our home so we go get clothes, more clothes, because we have clothes at home, and blanket. We get our belonging now, because we disappointed. We thought we have it, but we don't have it. If we know we don't have it, we would have carry more, you know. And then we talk to the boss and I want to go my home, and I come to get my belong, and tomorrow I come back. And they say, Okay, what time you're going to come?" "About noontime." And the next day, on Sunday, and then we go. After that we see our village, our heart. I don't know, my heart is full of joy. I see my farm. When I get to my farm, my location, and I don't know who talk first, or he talk to me first, that guy, we talk about escaping. And we say, yes. We agree, yes, we going to do, you know. Then we walk to other group because the village, people used to really, really have fun, because we don't work hard in there, you know. And I close to the, and the sun go down, and the young man, young girl, they go looking for the buffalo, cow to take back home. We just go talk to them. And they teaching us about, we are going to training, you know. Like they call me doctor. I'm not going to the doctor yet. [Chuckles] No, not yet, but they teaching me. And they ask how we feel, how's it, how is school, you know? We say, "Oh good. It's good. We like it. Happy," you know. And but our heart is not like that. And then we come in the village in nighttime. We say about how we going to do, you know. And I say I know how to write a letter, like leader letter, permission, permission. And I said, "I know how to do it." And then okay, we plan. At nighttime we go to the village. And then after I come from village, and I come



for play around at night time. I come home, I'm going to write, write permit. And I sign. I say I write two letter. One is Ted and [Thong], my friend, go to city to get the sauce, because we go to buy sauce in the city. (A: Oh, the medicine?) No, no, sauce. Sauce, the food. (S: Sauce?) Yah, sauce, yah. We go to buy sauce. And then the second letter, go to, from [Aseponethong], to Savannakhet, at the big city. I said we're going to go visit. Ted and [Thong] go to visit our cousin, their cousin in Savannakhet, and [Khantabouli], the name of the city. But when we say Savannakhet, we know that one the big city. I just write the two letter. And then in the morning my mother wake me up when the dawn come. She wake me up because I tell her that I'm going to go back to the camp. You prepare food for me. I say, "Okay." She prepare for me. Then other, parents, they come to me they want to give food for the children, clothes for the children who go with us, because we not allowed to go together to the camp. I say, "No, no, no, we don't need it. They don't need it you know, we have enough in there. Don't worry." [Laughs] And then I get my food, I eat, then I walk to my friend's house. Then we go out north to that camp. When, after their farm we go to the, like jungle, we just go on back to the south, to the city. We just walk fast, and run, and then we walk about three hour I think. Oh, about three hour, four hour, we get to the village, other village. And we see American. No, not American soldier, but government soldier have their suit, you know, soldier suit, that side. And they have, we see M16, we feel good. We feel good. And then we come to the city, and I stayed in the city.

A: What was your friend's name? [Unclear]

T: Thong.

A: Thong what? Did he have a last name?

T: No, we don't use last name.

A: Is he still around?

T: Yah, yah, he's still, he go back. We come to the city now, our country two side. One, Communist side; one is the freedom side. And we stay in the city, freedom side. And then let's see, '90, '93 we come. '95 they come. (A: '75) Yes, '75 they come, they control all. And when '93, I mean '70, '73 I come to the city, and the spy from the government. And really I come for looking for the job, and I want to be, go back to the soldier again, but in that time they don't accept a soldier. So I looking for a job. And somebody say that Ted and Thong come from the village. Come from Communist side. And some people, they say we are Communist, and they come to arrest us.

A: Really?

T: Yah. (A: Oh wow) Come to call us, and we go. We (--) I don't know, they arrest me! [Laughs] And they going to go to the camp, and they investigate me. And they sent me to other camp for what they call surrender, all Communist surrender camp.

A: What is it called?

T: The camp for the (A: Communist soldiers?) yah, when we surrender and over the [unclear]. (A: Surrender?) Yah. And they put in the camp to investigate.

A: Wow. So you were like a POW.

T: Yes.

A: But you were on the wrong side, arrested by your own people.

T: Yah, my own people they investigate about history, why I go, and who is leader in there? What I do? Where I might go, you know. Say everything. About three weeks I think I stay in the camp. About two or three days they call me and they investigate. I didn't know what they're doing, why they're putting me in there. You know, I really don't know. And then our cousin come, they looking for us. And some people tell them, they go to the camp. And they call to the guard camp and "We want to see Ted and Thong." And they call me. And then my cousin, they tell me, oh you know this one investigate. If they investigate, they know that you are Communist, they're going to put you in there. We were in there. They carry lots of people in there.

S: Oh, they dump you in the river?

T: Oh, I say, I don't know this you know. And then my cousins said, "Ted and Thong is not enemies, is not Communist. They are soldier in here before. They were children." You know, we are now adult. And then the next day they call us to the, investigate again, and no, no. Before that, before that the officer they, because I report the camp, there was weapon in there. I say M16, I know many weapon you know. And in my language I know everything in there. And they take me to the barn in the camp, the barn, they call the gun. What is this? I say, M16, AK, everything I say that. They said, "How do you know?" That guy ask me, "How do you know?" Then, "I watch the soldier in here." "Really?" "Yah!" "What you learn?" You know, then I tell him, "Why don't you tell me before?" You know, "Because you don't ask me about it." [All laugh] "Oh, okay," they said. You know, "That's why I see you wear, because American jacket." Because my jacket I still carry with me. And all the other Communist, but they wear the Communist suit in the same camp. Me and my friends, and two real Communist in there, they have suit, Communist suit. But we [taught] the different way too. You know when we [training] this side, we [know Communist], they are all Communist. And then they release us.

A: And where was that camp located?

T: In the city, in Savannakhet. (A: Okay) Yah, Savannakhet. Now they change the name to [unclear] city. And then they release and then I'm looking for a job. Then I work in a bank.

S: In a bank?

T: Yah.

A: And what year was this? Was this '75?

T: I start '73. (A: In the bank?) Yah, in the bank.

A: That was the year you were arrested?

T: Yah. (A: Okay) And I work in there. Then the Communist come. And then the people in my village they know that okay, Ted go over there, he's not on a (--) He work in a bank, you know. Then the people in the village, the countryside, not many people work in the government side in my village. They know me. They feel, "Oh Ted has a good what a good job. He's a good man." Then Communist come take over. I don't say anything about, [I be that shy]. My story just to say okay, "I grow up in there, my family in there, I come to study in here and everything and I get this job." Then I work with them, Communist. When we [broke] government bank before, then we go to, in their bank. You know, Communist took over the bank.

S: Oh, they took over the banks.

T: Yah.

S: When? While you were there working?

T: Yah, '75. '75 they took over. And then they, instead they release me to go to my home, or get out from the bank. They just transfer. You know, now it's no more. And then the [Loyal] Bank, now it's the name of the bank is a Communist, like Communist name.

S: Wow. So they just came right in and they told everyone to just go?

T: Yah. They don't told anyone, but they use everyone, just separate instead. I work about money. I go to the money part for them. And the one who work in accounting, they go to other department [unclear]. But they don't loss anything. They don't drop anyone out. They ask if you want to work. And then I work with them.

S: For how long?

T: I escape 1979.

S: So for four years? No.

T: I work with them, yah, '75, '76, '77, '78, '79, five years. And then I work in the camp. I go to training other bank too, you know. When they [start] their own location,

and they start. Because we have Bay Bank in here, you know, and then they branch. I go start the bank over there. (S: Where) In, they call [unclear]. Like Savannakhet, go to, on Vietnam, on Savannakhet, in [Sihanou], and [Dong Heng], and [Palan], and [Mouteen] and Sepone in Vietnam. Yah, Vietnam, [unclear]. [Unclear], Vietnam.

S: Did they, did your pay change from when you, before they came and took over the bank?

T: Yah, yah, they changed. But everyone, we all changed.

S: Umhm. So what happened to your pay? Like you got paid a certain amount when it was under the, a Loyal Bank, and then you got a different amount when the Communist came in?

T: Yah, they changed. When they changed money, they changed all. For example I used to get 3,000, 20,000 government, for government. And when they changed the money they convert to basic salary is 4,000, and 4,500. So then I get they call [level], I get 5,500.

S: Oh. As you stayed year by year you got more?

T: The work, different on the work.

S: Oh, on what you did?

T: Yah, what I did, yah. But if a new employee come basic is 4,500, and my step is 5,500. Then 7,000 and 9,000. The top one is 9,000 [unclear].

S: But you used to make a lot more, right?

T: Yes. But everything changed. Everything. Rent, food, everything have changed. Everything changed. So when we compare, it's still in, okay, you know, like what we call in here, like middle class. Really not, not in the real [unclear].

S: So what did you do in 1979 then, after you were finished working for the bank? Did you (--)

T: I escaped to Thailand.

S: You went to Thailand?

T: Yah, May 1979 I escaped to Thailand, the refugee camp.

S: By yourself, or with other people?

T: My wife, my children and other. We come together. Eight of us together. Let's see, we were three adult, five children escaped.

A: So you, your wife, and who was the other adult?

T: My neighbor next door. Because they have cousin in Thailand, the border. (A: Oh they do?) Yah, yah, on the other side. On Mekong River they have cousin. So I pay them. And they said, "Okay, you [obey] good." You know, "You will be safe." But they need money. Then we sold the house. We sold the house, \$200,000. That's just for to cross the Mekong River. (A: Hm)

S: And did you have to go at night? Or did you go during the day?

T: We [trick], we go by day. (S: You did?) Yah, like I go to work, and my wife, she's a school teacher. And before day, and she said, she try said to her boss, and "tomorrow I'm going to take my children to the doctor appointment." Then there's no school the next day, you know, because we have no telephone. Only next day report, [already] report. And her boss say, "Okay." And I come to work. In the morning my wife go to the farm and prepare like, we go searching for food with the children, with other family. And I go to work. Then I start work like 8:00 and by 9:00 I say, I talk to my boss. "I'm going to go to what they call like it's shopping and buy for the office something." And I say, "I'm going to go to shopping." Any my friend wanted to go with me because at that time I use car. I'm not driving, we have driver. And then I ask my friend, they want to go with me. I said, "No, no, I'm not going to take the car, I'm going to ride my bike." I have bicycle. We have motorcycle and we lost. Somebody steal it. So I'm not lucky. And then I ride my bike. Instead I'm going to take, I go by my bike. They say, "No, no, no, use the car." The company car, you know, bank car. And the guy we have in there, he use, we use. And then I say, "No, no, you don't go. I got to go alone." And instead I go to shopping, I go to my home and pick up my machete like for the string. Like I go to the farm, and I take my thing, like change my clothes and [wipe]. I take the machete (--)

A: So you dressed like a common person instead of a banker?

T: Yah, yah, like farmer now. Now I'm going to go looking for the food in the jungle, in the farm. Now I have put in here my machete in here.

A: What is it called?

T: They call that machete. It's knife to cut the tree.

A: Oh machete!

T: Yah, machete! [Laughs]

A: Okay. Okay, machete.

T: Yah, I just have it in my hand, put it in my side.

S: That's big isn't it? (T: Huh?) That's big, isn't it?

T: About this long.

A: About as long as your arm?

T: Yah, about as long as my arm. Because about this tree, about this long, you can trim in one, cut in one. And then I take taxi, no real taxi, we call tricycle. They drive by street, then they go out and they go to the farm. And I pay him, and he drop me off in there. He's looking you know. [Laughs] He might think something why I come to stop there you know. It's not farm, it's in between. And then I walk. I walk to the jungle and meet my wife, and walk to the Mekong River and meet the one who supposed to, because in daytime they had some [our clothes first.] And I said to go, and my one, my children, two of them they go, and then they put in the canoe. And they lay down in the canoe, and the canoe float down. And the other one go to the land, and then two of them go down, and go to canoe, and go inside the canoe, and lay down. So police don't see us from far away. And then each one of them they go to the canoe, you know, lay down in there. Then I jump up to the canoe [unclear], and the guy, he just yell out like fishing [unclear]. And the canoe go out on the shore and I just put net in there. Went to the, and they call like island in there, we stop in there. We walk to other side and pay money in there. And then [unclear] on canoe, but they motor canoe, motor.

A: Oh, it has a motor.

T: Yah, motor other side, the Thai side. We just jump out to there. After we pay money we jump out in there. They just [shish us] the [lake] the Thailand and they [unclear], you know, and we just get out and run to the Thai. And we walk about five, five kilometer to that house. And they're my friend's cousin. (S: To a house?) Yah, to the house.

S: In Thailand?

T: Yah, in Thailand. (S: Not a camp?) No, not camp yet. Because when we go over there and the people see us in there, where do not go because that lady, she doesn't know where she is. You know, get lost. And she ask about the village, about the people. And because the people know each other, and they say, "Okay, you walk in there. I know you come from Laos they say. You don't walk on the road, on the sidewalk." Because if you walk on the sidewalk the police going to see, the soldier they're going to see, they're going to arrest you, they're going to send you back to Laos. So you go like, they tell us where to go.

S: So you're walking like in a field, or in the jungle.

T: In the jungle. Yah, in the jungle. Most in the jungle, [unclear] because it look far away, you know. And the people walk in the field and they see it, and the police or

soldier going to come. They say bullets [no hurt]. Even Thai police, Thai soldier, or Laos, they [words unclear] it's no good either. When they arrest us they're going to want to get more money from us. And we walk about five kilometer to that house, that we get into the house. And at that day I don't know, I just go to the family, friendly, you know. Then they go to the farm, I go with them, with the boy in that house. And when, at evening come, the father come, "Oh no, no, you don't go anywhere." [Unclear] for you, you know, because stranger here, people come, they see, they're going to report to police, and you going to arrest. And they just hiding us in the house. And we, they go to, they don't have telephone either, but somebody have, they call to the camp. Now she have a cousin in the camp to pick it up. Then we come, they pay. He just say, "Don't talk anything on the bus." "Now for Ted, he said I put newspaper," I read newspaper, because when we say our word, our sound, it's Laos, they're going to know us, they're going to arrest. So just better don't talk.

A: So otherwise if you're walking down the street they might think you're Thai?

T: Laos. No, we on the Thai side now.

A: Yah, but what I'm saying is if you don't talk, there's no way for them to tell you, tell that you're a Laos person verses a Thai person.

T: Yah, they don't know. They think I'm Thai. They don't talk, they don't bother. (A: Okay) If they know it's Laotian they're going to get you in trouble. (All laugh) Then we go to the camp. We had to go to the camp, but he tell us how to get to the camp, you know. It's just like you know where you're going, you know? Just go straight and just walk that way. Follow me, don't look anywhere, you know, just follow me. Like you know where you're going, and then we get into the camp.

A: What was the name of your friend that has cousins in Thailand?

T: The one that have big family. Thum. (A: Tum) Yah, Thum.

A: And they have a last name or not?

T: I don't know the last name.

A: And what was the name of the place in Thailand where the house was that you stayed at?

T: I don't know the name of the village, but the state is we call, Pnom, Nakon Pnom.

A: Okay. And what was the name of the camp that you went to?

T: [Unclear], now Ou Boun Camp. (A: What is it?) Ou Boun Camp. (A: Ou Boun) Ou Boun, yah, Ou Boun.

S: And how long were you there for?

T: And I stayed there for ten months.

S: For ten months?

T: Yah. When I come about a week and somebody, American, they go interview. And they write a paper “who want to come to United States now register.” And I say, “No, I don’t want to go. I want to go back to my country.” They say, “No, no, no, no, no. You just put your name down. If you don’t want to go you can change you mind. If you don’t want now, in three months they come one time do it and it will be too late.” And I put my name in there. In the camp I was really, really poor. You know, get more trouble like we get out from the, like what do they call, wolf, right. We get out from the wolf, and we get to the tiger, you know. [Laughs] More problems, more scared. And I want to get out from the camp. And then they say, “Well China, they come to interview.” I register to China. [Laughs] (S: China?) Yah. And my hope, when I go to China I’m going to go back to Laos, you know. And Argentina, Argentina, in Africa.

A: What is that?

T: Argentina. I don’t know what.

A: Argentina.

S: Oh, Argentina.

T: Yah, Argentina, yah.

A: In South America.

T: Yes.

A: They also were accepting refugees?

T: Accept refugees, yah. I write out in there. And then at that time I have four children. Then they tell us, they said, “We accept only two.” Two children.

S: Really, in Argentina?

T: Yah, only two. (S: Interesting) And then I don’t qualify. And in China too. When the China come, they come back because too many people register. They want to know, they said who really want to go again they’ll have to register again. And we change my mind not to. I changed my mind. (S: Why?) I don’t know. I don’t know. Maybe I’m scared or something. I say I don’t register the second time. And the France I register, but then the United States did call me to interview. So I’m lucky. First I interview, and then again, and third, and pass.



S: Three interviews?

T: Yah, three interviews.

S: What did they ask you? Like how long were the interviews?

T: At first I don't know how long. Maybe 30 minutes? I don't know. I don't know. But they ask about our story. We, we report everything, you know. Then we say that's the white, white form we report. And the green form, green interview, that mean they ask if you fail your report then you cannot come. After second interview they call green, and they call [unclear]. I don't know what they translate for. I don't know about it, but third one. And then if I pass that one, then all set.

S: Did they say how you would fail an interview? Probably not, huh?

T: Oh yah, many, but they don't tell. But from experience people sometime they forget what they say. They forget what they say.

S: If your facts don't match up, is that when they say you fail?

T: Yah. For example like oh okay, I say I used to be soldier. But when they ask you what branch you wish to be there and who is your boss, and you forget it. You say wrong, then you liar.

A: So they were looking, in one way one of the ways you could get approved was because you fought for the American side?

T: Yes, because some people they don't really, and a soldier, but they act you know, like they lie really. We say too, they lie to want to come. Some was because not soldier. Not only soldier they take. You know, they take everyone who could [unclear].

A: So tell us about leaving the camp and coming to the US and that whole process. Where did you come to and how did you get here?

T: Okay. After we finished interview, we passed and we wait for a sponsor. And then sponsor I have First Reform Church in [Linden], Washington

A: Linden?

T: Yah, Linden, Washington (S: Washington State?) State, yah, close to Canada, in [unclear]. Yah, they sponsor me there. And we just get a name, they say, "Ted, Ou Boun Camp." "Oh, that's Chinese," they said. [Laughs] And then they come and they say, "You are American." My sponsor is the first sponsor is at [unclear] Camp.

S: So you and your wife and your kids all went?

T: Yah, all went there.

S: And your neighbor too?

T: No, no. They go to stay Seattle too, they go to Seattle because of their family in Seattle. (S: Oh) And we call, we write letter to them to looking for sponsor for us, but thank God my sponsor take first you know, because [unclear] then we come with them, same airplane too with that family. But not lady come with, but her brother come the same, a friend with me. We are lucky, but we don't know where we go, but you know when we come to Seattle, we don't know Seattle. And when I go to Linden about, when people ask me where you arrived first, I say, "California." And how long and I tell about story, I say, "About two hour from airport to my home." They say, "No, not California, they said, it must be Seattle." [Laughs] Then I get there, my sponsor they take care of me really good. I thank God for that. I'm really, really, I feel happy like I come like a bird in a cage. Today one sponsor come to take me to their house and eat and put me in my home, and eat lunch, and dinnertime other family come to take me, go to their house, eat and send me home.

S: Now where did you live? Did you live with the sponsor?

T: They rent for us. (S: Oh) Yah, they rent for us. First the house, it's not ready, we stay in hotel for two days, for two nights. Sleep in hotel for two nights. Then we will go back to our home they rent for us. And I come for a week, or two week, about a week and they take us to their house and eat. And then they take us to the supermarket, pick up the food. What we take, we take, they just pay money. We get [unclear], and they tell us to cook by ourselves. And they teach us how to use stove, and everything.

S: Everything, yah.

T: Everything, because we come from really like jungle. [Laughs] Yah.

S: That must have been interesting.

T: Yah, but I feel really good now. I'm sick you know at that time, and I was like a bird, but feel happy, really, really fulfilled. You know, even I don't know anywhere, I don't not go anywhere, but really feel happy. I say, "Well someday I will be able to contact, connect our family, you know." And we eat rice, we eat bread, and American food. And then we have, go to see doctor. And then we don't know English. And the doctor looking for a translate for us. And they got Thai lady in [Birmingham]. They get a call to help translate about medication. You know, make sure they take the right time, and right medication. And then my sponsor have opportunity to meet with Thai lady, and we talk. We talk, because the Laos and Thai we really, really close. And sponsor say, "Wow you look like you really know each other." You know, and then they ask us about food. We say about food first, because we hungry. We don't eat good, you know. We just stay survival. And then we ask about sticky rice. And the lady tell us in Seattle they

have it. And they gave address to sponsor and the sponsor take us to Seattle, to Seattle to buy food. And two months later we get sticky rice. And that time my daughter, she's six months. When we cook rice, sticky rice, she really, really eat well, and [unclear-laughing]. Sticky rice, you know, she knows. (S: She liked it) Yah. Then from two months after we arrived in Washington State, and we eat sticky rice.

S: So you were happy.

T: Yah, we're happy.

S: Now how long did you stay there for in Washington?

T: I stayed there for 1980, in February '80 I come. And 1986, in May, I moved to Lowell.

S: Oh really. (T: Yah) Now how did you come here? Did you know anyone here?

T: And after I come and I sponsor my brother, sister-in-law. When they come there they have a friend in here, and other relatives in here. And they stayed with us for I think two year, three year, and they moved to here. And then they say, "Well in Lowell lots of Laotian, about 3,000 that time. About 2 or 3,000. And over there in that town there's only I say two, two family of Laotian, and I think 11 family of Cambodia.

S: In Washington?

T: No, no, in Linden. Yah, small town, people know each other in there. I stay in there, it's like they call, Mayor. Because I live in Laotian, want to go, Laotian in Seattle, they want to go to Vancouver, Canada.

A: Vancouver?

T: Yah. And they stop by in my house and I take them to Canada. Some people from Seattle [unclear], no, no, not [unclear], [unclear] they go to pick up strawberry, raspberry. They work on the farm. They go to my house, because the farmer, they know me.

A: So they call you the Mayor?

T: Yah, like a Mayor because everyone stop by there. And the farmer they know me, you know, when they see Laotian, "You know Ted?" "Yah." [Laughs] We have really good time, we have fun in there. And we know each other, Cambodia, and Vietnamese, you know. We get along good. So we go to church together, you know. Each one we go to different church in Sunday morning. And Sunday afternoon we gather all Laos, Asian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Laos, Cambodia, have special service to learn the bible.

A: What year did you convert to Christianity?

T: '81.

S: '81.

T: One year after [unclear].

A: After you came to Washington?

T: Yah. Yah.

A: And what made you decide to do that?

T: I learn the bible, and I believe in Buddha, but also because in our culture we believe in ghost, and spirit, evil, and the Buddha, we worship Buddha, and we sacrifice for like the call Hindu. Three together in there, you know. Most Laotian, we all together, but we don't know which one and which one. So we all say, we say all Buddha, but it's not. Then when we have problem, like when I sick, my children sick, you know, we call to the evil spirit, a spirit. And then okay to come to help you for you give. If my children get well, or no, I will give you the food, something like that. And that time, that one about spirit, about we believe, how to believe, and also about religion and their Buddha. And I learn Buddha, and I'm thinking about Buddha kissing. And the one word that's really confusing me is in the bible it said one God in the world, only one God. And, but they call as a name Jesus Christ. And I say, "Well, you know, how about Buddha? You know, how about Buddha?" Because we believe, believe Buddha. When I heard in there, in my country they say, "Buddha is a Laos God." You know, Laos God. Jesus Christ is a white people God. And we study bible, I thinking about it and I pray. Then finally I think oh, when the Buddha said that "A God is going to come after me." Then we say, "Oh, must be the God Buddha said it's Jesus Christ." And I study more, I'm thinking more about when other God going to come? Then I study about Buddha history, or Buddha prediction (A: prediction) yah, prediction, yah. And then his religion say, his religion going to go up to 5,000 year. But if a woman ordain, if a woman ordain a religion, his religion about going to be 500 year, then I compare about it. I say, "Okay, because after Buddha predict it and then have a woman ordain in Buddha religion (--)

A: Have a woman ordained?

S: Oh, in the Buddhist religion !

T: Yah, ordained, yah. Woman ordained. Then I think, oh. I say I come from Buddha, die, to Jesus Christ born. It's 500 year.

S: Really?

T: Yah, 540 years or something. You know, like because now Buddha die, now it's 2,551, the year of Buddha die, for Buddha die. Jesus born 2008, this year.

A: Yah, yah.

T: When we subtract about 540 something. I say okay it must be this one! You know. That's how I become. And also the power of spirit. When before when my children sick I sacrifice that, and when heal and we give food to that. And one day my baby, you know, she cries, cries. We don't know what's the reason. This one a miracle. [Laughs] And then we do like we used to do, it doesn't help. And we, then I talk to my wife, I say well we learn in the bible and the pastor tell us that he just have a power, lets we pray, try, you know. And we pray. After we pray, then my children asleep, my baby sleep. I said, okay it must be [unclear]. [Laughs]

A: Which baby is this?

T: Now she study in Boston. She's there in a school in Boston.

S: What's her name?

T: Yah, Susan. Yah, she's going to finish, one more year she's going to finish and get her degree.

A: Great. So you came to Lowell in 1986. (T: Yes) And what did you do for work?

T: I work three company. First I come to, I work, I don't know what Stylelec [A: Styletec?] Yah, Stylelec, or Styletec, they make the heel, shoe. (A: Yah) Yah, so time about three, four months. Then I work in USCI in Billerica. (A: Okay) [Unclear] in USCI. In 1987, I come 1986, in 1987 I become in there for four months, then they become, they take me become permanent. Then USCI changed to AVE, then change to Metronic, now Metronic. So I work there now they call twenty-one years.

A: Oh, good for you.

S: Wow!

T: Yah, for that company

A: Tell us how you got involved in being a pastor, and perhaps connection to Christ Church United?

T: Okay. And when I become, I see miracle and many thing we pray, instead we call to the evil spirit like I used to do. And everything we have problem we call to God. And then the answer is still the same that we did, you know. Then when after we received, or we heal or something, and in God [as Christian] I just thank God. I just give thanks. We don't have sacrifice. We don't have to pay money. We don't have to kill the chickens. You know, we say okay this way is good. It's like that one have power the same. You know when we call they must answer, you know, then we believe. We believe in God, what we're thinking about, I want to become Christian, or member of the church. I talk

to my wife and I go to clean the church. (A: Which church?) And then the church sponsor me. (A: Which church?) First Reform Church in Linden, Washington.

A: Okay.

T: In that time I clean church, and then I sing the song, they say, "Father I adore you, live my life before you, how I love you." Pastor clap the hands. [Laughs] I didn't know she behind me, you know, because I vacuum.

A: Oh, you were vacuuming. [All laugh]

T: Yah, vacuuming, yah. And then in a couple of day I think he ask me, "Ted, do you think you want to be member of the church, or baptize?" I say, "Yah, I think I talk about it with my wife, you know, we want to be, and how can we be partner, you know." And, "Oh, okay, good," he said. "Before you come to baptize, or be member, you have to come to bible study with me." And in from that time, then we set the time to bible study. Then become Christian. The whole church happy.

A: Yah. So how did you become a pastor?

T: Then after that we become Christian I tell my family, and I go to Seattle, Laotian. That's surprised them. You know, they say, "Oh no, Laotian go to Temple, not go to church, you know. We go to church only when [unclear] come." I said, "Oh, I really believe." They say, "No," they say, "No." In here they have some, but the people don't talk much. They have Laos Church in Seattle. (A: Hm) And even when we come to see them they don't say, they don't tell us about the church. And but I believe. I say, "Well you know, I want to be, I want to see Laotian pastor who can get, who can be able to teach me to understand more." I'm looking for Laos pastor. And then my cousin, my brother's sister-in-law come here and they said, "In Lowell is a large Laotian over there. We have no Laotian. If we stay there our children not going to speak Laos." And then "Okay, I said, we're going to move." We're going to move to, we're going to move to Lowell. And also while in Linden I still thinking. I say, "Okay, if I come to Lowell in regular day, I work. And Sunday I'm going to go to church." Sunday I go to church. Or if my friend call me or to go to the temple, I will go sometime. That's what I think, but really I want to see the Laotian pastor. I want to learn more. We're going to [unclear] from go to the church, but we really believe, really love it, we like it. Now I like it, both me and my wife, that's why I say we. We really believe. And then we come to Lowell.

When I come to Lowell and the sponsor, they have party for us, farewell party. And the sponsor want our pastor because of the whole church, you know, and close to us about, seven or eight of them really close to us, help out a lot. And he come to talk as a speaker. He said, "Ted, God bring you to Linden. You come to Linden, Washington, it's not your plan. It's not by accident, it's God's plan. Now you go from Lowell, go from Linden to Lowell, it's God's plan. We believe that you are going to," what they say, it's like be minister, you know, telling the people, not pastor yet. You know, just help people to know God, you know. I say, "Yah," but really in my heart no, I don't think I'm going to

be qualified for pastor. But I really want to be Christian, good Christian. So I really want to be Christian, but I don't want to be pastor. Then when we come here, we come on Saturday, and Sunday we had no one where to go, don't know where to go, you know, I just watching TV. And I feel it's like lonely. You know, okay, okay. Next, then next Sunday come and I just get up and prepare myself go to walk to the street and go to the church, and next door, next to my house. And my children go to Nazarene Church.

S: Nazarene?

T: Yah, Nazarene, because they know friend. I don't know, in the school, because they know each other. Then they go to church together, the bus come to pick up. And they go to Nazarene Church.

A: In Lowell?

T: In Lowell, yah, Nazarene Church. And me, second Sunday and I go to other church in that All American Church, you know, I just go there. Pastor welcome me. I don't know, they ask me what I need, you know. I said to Pastor, "You know, I just want to worship God." And then after church, we done, I come home, and my children come home from church. And they exciting. They said, "Lots of Laotian in there, lots of Cambodia, lots of Asian people." And then the third Sunday I go too with them.

A: Okay.

S: You went with them?

T: Yah, I went with them, yah. And when I went there Pastor, and the people of the church welcome. It's really warm. "Wow, we're looking for people like you!" Then we go worship, and after bible study together.

A: So what year did you become a pastor?

T: 19, let's see, 1987 I come. No, no, '87, '87.

A: '86 you came to Lowell.

T: Yah, '86 I came and I go to that church. (A: Okay) Now '87 come, for one year I go in there. (A: Yah) I have a bible study. Then I meet Don [Pierson], Pastor Don [Pierson], he's [Unclear] church in Andover. (A: Okay) And he's an American. His wife if Thai. (A: Oh really?) Yah. And they're looking for a church, and they are looking for Laotian, or Thai, or Asian people. And they go worship with us in there, and get to know us.

A: At the Nazarene?

T: In the Nazarene. And we worship together, and bible study together. Then he invite me to come to UCC. (A: Here) Yah, in the big church, and meeting in the chapel they call steering committee. It's in the church. Yah, they're looking for to have Laotian. (A: Okay) And I come to meeting with them. And I see their goal. Their goal is they're looking for pastor for to start church. And I say I still looking for pastor too over there. And they say if I come here they're going to look for pastor for me. So then after I come to meeting with them, I don't know how many, three months, or four months, or I don't know, for awhile I come to meeting with them and I talk to my group. I say, "Well it's a good, I think it's a good ideal, they're going looking for pastor for us in there." And I talk to pastor in there. They, they not really looking for, but they will encourage us. Like they want me to study, you know, in Laos bible somewhere. They have Laos Church Conference. They tell us where is the Laos church, you know. But if I want to go, they will send me, go. They tell us, but the Nazarene Church don't provide me about paying, going, you know. So they just tell, [unclear] for I want to go. And then this church on Andover Association, they said they're going to looking for pastor for me. And I talk to my friend, and I say I plan to come. And then they decide, two family they don't come. They said they support, it's a good idea, but they grow up in that church. One is Laotian married with American in that church. And he say, "Ted, I as a brother, I support you to go. It's a good idea. It's a good plan, but I cannot go because my family is here." Other Laos, four Laotian family, they said they cannot go because they come when their children are young. Now they grow up in here. This church helping them a lot. You know, they are good for them. They cannot avoid, you know. It's good people don't [get back], you know.

A: Yah, they're not going to abandoned them.

T: No, not going to abandon. Then two family in there, two family still in there. And the whole of them they come with me.

A: How many families roughly?

T: The [members] still the same in that time when I bring, I bring about eight. Yah, I think six, six to eight. About six. I come. I decide to come. And then when they come with me in Easter in 1992 I come. (A: Okay) It take a while to get together. You know, I come to study with them too, on a meeting with them. In April in 1992 I come here. Then at that time, 1992, '93, they're still looking for pastor. And for one year they connect to many Laotian in here, and finally they decide, the Laotian pastor decide, said that, "If you want to have your fruit, you know, you should grow." [Chuckles] "If you go get other, somebody's fruit it's in their tree, from their tree, you like to take from other, you know. Better you grow up by yourself." And then they say about how, how long the church, you know, how the church start. And because they report it's Laotian in here about more than twenty, and they say, "Who's leader now?" You know. Then they say, "It's Ted is the leader, where he study, you know, how can he become Christian?" And ask about my story, you know, why I come to church, you know. And then they say, "Go. And that's it, it's a plan. You can [unclear] Ted." You know, and then they send



me to school, and get in a program from Newton Theology. (A: Yup) Yah, I take the program.

A: In Newton?

T: In Newton, yah. So I take the program and also I training, I go to training with Laos Church, in they call Laos Conference. And then they gave me certificate.

A: Oh yah. Where is that located, the Laos Conference of Churches?

T: The headquarter in California.

A: Oh okay, and did you go out there?

T: Yah, I go out there for two times. (A: Wow) Because you see we training different states. (A: Yup) This year we don't know yet. We don't know where yet, but soon they going to say to us, because I call last week, they say the paper going to come. This year we go different state, we're training for one week. Take the program and come to study. And next year go review. So then, and I training in there and they give me certificate. And I get credit from there, and from study, kneel down together. Then I become ordained in 1997.

A: Wow. Congratulations! Over ten years huh?

T: Yah, yah, eleven years, ten years.

A: How many families now, or how many people total?

T: The total is adult it's less than it used to be, but the children is more. (A: Yup) Almost twenty children, Laotian children. But we don't take care of the children. The Sunday School American help us.

A: So the adults?

T: Adults, we worship about 15 to 17, 18 people each Sunday.

A: Okay. Any final thoughts about your entire story, and coming, surviving the war and then coming to Lowell? Or any final thing that you want to share with people?

T: Well one thing is I want to, people to know, you know, I don't really, don't know, but since I used to go to Temple, I believe in Buddha. Now I become Christian and believe. Pastor, and I want people to study about Jesus Christ and the love of God. You know, Jesus Christ is God of the world. He is not God of American. So I really looking for a way to spread my ministry. Want Laotian to know, no misunderstand, you know. I don't know [unclear]. I want people to know now as we connect to other church. And I try to have community you know, to be, understand each other. I connect with Laos

Association, you know. [Name unclear], we still work together and he's member on the board.

A: Okay. Great.

T: And also our ministry help people in Lowell as we can, like we help them to get green card, or citizenship. So in social service like when people need translate in hospital, like me and [name unclear], we help each other in here. And also I want to bring the gospel to my country. We have helped the church in Laos too. Like this year some we have project. You know, and I go to my village and have them build school, and help them dig the well, have water.

A: Dig the well, yah.

T: And the last project we just build school, I mean bridge, because in my village is between, the river is divide. (A: Oh really?) Like I said, it's a one village, that's a small village. We call small village, my family Rasakham, Mr. Rasakham Family. [Laughs] And we have big village. And we have that other side so four village in that, together. I said, "Oh, there's the river in the middle." Four on this side (--)

A: And so you guys built a bridge?

T: Yah, then we build the bridge. Now we have bridge to go to that.

A: Wow. And that's the Mekong River?

T: No, no, just a river. (A: What's the name?) It's a small river they call [unclear]. [Unclear].

A: Well Ted I want to thank you, and I'm sure Sarah wants to thank you very much for spending so much time with us this afternoon.

T: Yah, thank you like you said. No, I afraid, I don't know what I'm going to say, but it's, I think it's good. It's all right.

A: Didn't you have a good story to share?

T: Yes. [Laughs]

A: See.

T: Yah, I feel good I share story, you know. So.

A: Good. Well thanks again.

S: We appreciate it.

T: Okay, and I also I think I come here, like my [unclear] to, my sponsor said. I come in here, but I don't know where I'm going, like Abraham. You know, just get out from country, where I going to go, you know. So it's the same thing, I get out from my country, I come to Thailand. I don't know where to go. Finally I come here, and I be able to go back to my country. Thank God, you know. So I go to my country and tell people about that too. So instead I'm afraid now be friends with them. We laugh. That's good.

S: It's pretty amazing.

T: Thank you for taking this opportunity. I thank you for you coming.

A: Thanks a lot. Take care.

S: I appreciate it.

**Interview Ends**